

Washington, DC -- Continuing his work to increase domestic oil supply and lower gas prices for local families, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) voted today for legislation he cosponsored mandating the government to lease land for oil production on millions of currently unproductive acres of land in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.

“Skyrocketing fuel prices are hurting local families and crippling businesses across Upstate New York,” **Arcuri said**. “This bill is real action to give families and business short term relief while we invest in long term solutions to end our dependence on finite fossil fuels. I have consistently supported bipartisan calls to increase drilling and production on existing, open lands to give consumers some immediate relief. Today, we took one more step to open up millions of acres in Alaska. Oil companies are holding American families hostage so they can reap record profits – it is time for oil companies to drill where they already can, increase supply and bring prices down.”

The DRILL Act (H.R. 6515), cosponsored by Arcuri, would promote domestic oil production, most notably in 20 million acres of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A).

This legislation mandates that the Bush Administration conduct annual lease sales for five years to ensure that land in the NPR-A is more rapidly leased for oil and gas production. It will increase domestic oil supply by requiring the Secretary of Interior to offer at least one lease sale annually.

“Drilling in the National Petroleum Reserve would increase supply and bring down prices far more quickly than outdated calls to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge” **Arcuri said**. “The National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska not only contains more oil than ANWR, but it is closer to existing pipelines and already open for leasing – making it a better solution to help struggling families.”

Currently, there are 68 million acres onshore and offshore in the U.S. that are leased by oil companies and are fully open to drilling but not yet developed. These lands contain 81% of America’s federal oil and gas reserves. If oil companies tapped these 68 million acres of leased land, they could generate an estimated 4.8 million barrels of oil a day and 44.7 billion cubic feet of natural gas each day.

The NPR-A has an estimated 10.6 billion barrels of oil, versus the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) which has an estimated 10.4 billion barrels of oil. If the 20 million acres in NPR-A were put into production, along with the 68 million acres of already-leased federal lands and water on the continental United States, domestic oil production could nearly double. To incentivize domestic production on those areas, H.R. 6515 also incorporates provisions of the 'Use It or Lose It' legislation, cosponsored by Arcuri, which requires oil companies to drill on the leases they already have or give them up and allow another company to drill.

Based on Energy Information Agency (EIA) projections, oil production in ANWR is four to six years behind that of the NPR-A. The NPR-A is already partially leased and eligible for more leasing immediately, unlike ANWR and new coastal areas.

H.R. 6515 would also reinstate a ban on the foreign export of Alaskan oil to ensure a sufficient domestic supply. In 2000, approximately 7% of crude oil production from the Alaska North Slope was exported to South Korea, Japan, and China.

Due to Republican opposition, H.R. 6515 did not pass the House today.

To reduce gas prices immediately, Arcuri supported legislation signed into law by the President to suspend shipments to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). Arcuri has also called on the President to start releasing oil from the SPR to increase the supply of oil and bringing gas prices down immediately. Previous Republican and Democratic presidents have released oil from the SPR if economic conditions warranted.

Arcuri is also a cosponsor of the Responsible Ownership of Public Lands Act (H.R. 6256) which would place an escalating fee on land that oil companies have leased but are not using for production by the third year of the lease, providing a strong incentive for oil companies to stop stockpiling these leases and begin using them. The revenue raised from these fees would go toward renewable energy and energy efficiency investments that will reduce dependence on oil, as well as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), a block grant program under which the federal government gives states annual grants to operate home energy assistance programs for low-income households.

Since taking office, Arcuri has championed legislation that will invest in alternative energy

technology to bring consumer costs down and grow our domestic economy.

The historic and bipartisan Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, signed into law at the end of last year, will increase vehicle fuel efficiency standards and help save American families \$700 to \$1,000 per year at the gas pump. New building, appliance and lighting efficiency standards included in the law will save consumers \$400 billion through 2030. Additionally, the law invests in new “green collar” jobs through incentives and initiatives for American produced renewable energy.

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